

AMENDMENT(S) TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently Amended) A sterilization case assembly, comprising:

a plurality of sterilization cases including a first sterilization case and a second sterilization case, said second sterilization case stacked directly upon said first sterilization case in a vertical direction, said second sterilization case offset from said first sterilization case in a frontward to rearward direction, each of said plurality of sterilization cases being selectively movable between a closed position and an open position, said second sterilization case offset from said first sterilization case in a direction transverse to said vertical direction when each of said first and said second sterilization cases is in said closed position, in said closed position each of said plurality of sterilization cases having a general box shape and including a plurality of walls defining said general box shape, in said closed position said plurality of walls of each of said plurality of sterilization cases including a top wall and a bottom wall, said top wall and said bottom wall of each of said plurality of sterilization cases being substantially parallel relative to one another in said closed position and substantially horizontal in said closed position, said bottom wall of said second sterilization case at least partially directly contacting said top wall of said first sterilization case when each of said first and said second sterilization cases is in said closed position, said first and said second sterilization cases being substantially identical to one another when each of said first and said second sterilization cases is in said closed position, each of said plurality of sterilization cases including at least one drawer therein selectively slidable from said closed position to said open position in a rearward to frontward direction, said bottom wall of said second sterilization case being offset from said top wall of said first sterilization case in said frontward to rearward direction when each of said first and second sterilization cases is in said closed position and when said second sterilization case is seated on said first sterilization

case.

2. (Canceled)
3. (Original) The sterilization case assembly of claim 1, wherein at least one said case includes a plurality of drawers.
4. (Original) The sterilization case assembly of claim 3, wherein said at least one case that includes a plurality of drawers has a hinged front cover.
5. (Original) The sterilization case assembly of claim 1, wherein said second sterilization case includes a hinged lid.
6. (Previously Presented) The sterilization case assembly of claim 5, wherein said lid is removable and rotates about a generally horizontal axis.
7. (Original) The sterilization case assembly of claim 5, wherein said first sterilization case includes at least one handle, said second sterilization case includes at least one recessed pocket, at least one said handle interlocks with at least one said recessed pocket when said second sterilization case is stacked upon said first sterilization case in a vertical direction.
8. (Currently Amended) A sterilization case assembly, comprising:  
  
a plurality of sterilization cases including a first sterilization case and a second

sterilization case, said second sterilization case offset from said first sterilization case in a frontward to rearward direction, said first sterilization case including at least one handle, said second sterilization case including at least one recessed pocket, at least one said handle interlocking with at least one said recessed pocket when said second sterilization case is stacked directly upon said first sterilization case in a vertical direction, each of said plurality of sterilization cases being selectively movable between a closed position and an open position, said second sterilization case being offset from said first sterilization case in a direction transverse to said vertical direction when each of said first and said second sterilization cases is in said closed position, in said closed position each of said plurality of sterilization cases having a general box shape and including a plurality of walls defining said general box shape, in said closed position said plurality of walls of each of said plurality of sterilization cases including a top wall and a bottom wall, said top wall and said bottom wall of each of said plurality of sterilization cases being substantially parallel relative to one another in said closed position and substantially horizontal in said closed position, said bottom wall of said second sterilization case at least partially directly contacting said top wall of said first sterilization case when said second sterilization case is stacked upon said first sterilization case in a vertical direction and when each of said first and said second sterilization cases is in said closed position, each of said plurality of sterilization cases including at least one drawer therein selectively slidable from said closed position to said open position in a rearward to frontward direction, said bottom wall of said second sterilization case being offset from said top wall of said first sterilization case in said frontward to rearward direction when each of said first and second sterilization cases is in said closed position and when said second sterilization case is seated on said first sterilization case.

9-17. (Canceled)

18. (Currently Amended) A method of assembling a sterilization case assembly, comprising the steps of:

stacking a plurality of sterilization cases including a first sterilization case and a second sterilization case, said second sterilization case stacked directly upon said first sterilization case in a vertical direction;

offsetting said second sterilization case from said first sterilization case in a frontward to rearward direction;

providing both said first and said second sterilization cases are selectively movable between a closed position and an open position, each of said plurality of sterilization cases including at least one drawer therein selectively slidable from said closed position to said open position in a rearward to frontward direction;

providing that in said closed position each of said first and said second sterilization cases has a general box shape and includes a plurality of walls defining said general box shape, in said closed position said plurality of walls of each of said first and said second sterilization cases including a top wall and a bottom wall, said top wall and said bottom wall of each of said first and said second sterilization cases being substantially parallel relative to one another in said closed position and substantially horizontal in said closed position, said bottom wall of said second sterilization case at least partially directly contacting said top wall of said first sterilization case when said second sterilization case is stacked upon said first sterilization case in a vertical direction and when each of said first and said second sterilization cases is in said closed position; and

offsetting said second sterilization case from said first sterilization case in a direction transverse to said vertical direction when each of said first and said second sterilization cases is in

said closed position, said first and said second sterilization cases being substantially identical to one another when each of said first and said second sterilization cases is in said closed position, said bottom wall of said second sterilization case being offset from said top wall of said first sterilization case in said frontward to rearward direction when each of said first and second sterilization cases is in said closed position and when said second sterilization case is seated on said first sterilization case.

19. (Original) The method of claim 18, further including the step of interlocking said second sterilization case with said first sterilization case.

20. (Previously Presented) The sterilization case assembly of claim 1, wherein in said closed position said plurality of walls of each of said plurality of sterilization cases includes a front wall and a rear wall, said front wall and said rear wall of each of said plurality of sterilization cases being substantially parallel relative to one another in said closed position, said front wall of said second sterilization case being transversely offset from and substantially parallel to said front wall of said first sterilization case when each of said first and said second sterilization cases is in said closed position, said rear wall of said second sterilization case being transversely offset from and substantially parallel to said rear wall of said first sterilization case when each of said first and said second sterilization cases is in said closed position.

21. (Previously Presented) The sterilization case assembly of claim 1, wherein said plurality of walls of each of said plurality of sterilization cases includes a generally vertically oriented rear wall coupled with said top and bottom walls, said top wall including at least one partially spherical top registration element, said bottom wall including at least one partially

spherical bottom registration element, said top registration element being closer to said rear wall than said bottom registration element when each of said first and said second sterilization cases is in said closed position, said bottom registration element of said second sterilization case directly contacting said top registration element of said first sterilization case.

22. (Previously Presented) The sterilization case assembly of claim 9, wherein said plurality of walls of each of said plurality of sterilization cases includes a generally vertically oriented rear wall coupled with said top and bottom walls, said top wall including at least one partially spherical top registration element, said bottom wall including at least one partially spherical bottom registration element, said top registration element being closer to said rear wall than said bottom registration element when each of said first and said second sterilization cases is in said closed position, said bottom registration element of said second sterilization case directly contacting said top registration element of said first sterilization case.

23. (Previously Presented) The sterilization case assembly of claim 18, wherein said plurality of walls of each of said plurality of sterilization cases includes a generally vertically oriented rear wall coupled with said top and bottom walls, said top wall including at least one partially spherical top registration element, said bottom wall including at least one partially spherical bottom registration element, said top registration element being closer to said rear wall than said bottom registration element when each of said first and said second sterilization cases is in said closed position, said bottom registration element of said second sterilization case directly contacting said top registration element of said first sterilization case.

24. (Previously Presented) The sterilization case assembly of claim 1, wherein each of said plurality of sterilization cases is configured for providing organization, storage, and sterilization for at least one surgical instrument contained therein, said second sterilization case being offset from said first sterilization case in order to provide stability to said first and second sterilization cases when said second sterilization case is stacked on said first sterilization case and any of said plurality of drawers are slid to said open position.

25. (Currently Amended) The sterilization case assembly of claim 1, wherein said second sterilization case is offset from said first sterilization case in said frontward to rearward direction such that said first and second sterilization cases form a stair-stepped stack of said plurality of sterilization cases so as to provide stability to said stair-stepped stack and to offset a center of gravity forward shift of said stair-stepped stack and thereby to prevent tipping of said stair-stepped stack when said drawer of said second sterilization case is slid to said open position, said second sterilization case being offset from said first sterilization case in said frontward to rearward direction such that said stair-stepped stack is self-supporting when any of said drawers of said plurality of sterilization cases is in said open position.

26. (Canceled)

27. (Previously Presented) The sterilization case assembly of claim 8, wherein said second sterilization case is offset from said first sterilization case in said frontward to rearward direction such that said first and second sterilization cases form a stair-stepped stack of said plurality of sterilization cases so as to provide stability to said stair-stepped stack and to offset a center of gravity forward shift of said stair-stepped stack and thereby to prevent tipping of said

stair-stepped stack when said drawer of said second sterilization case is slid to said open position, said second sterilization case being offset from said first sterilization case in said frontward to rearward direction such that said stair-stepped stack is self-supporting when any of said drawers of said plurality of sterilization cases is in said open position.

28. (Canceled)

29. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 18, wherein said second sterilization case is offset from said first sterilization case in said frontward to rearward direction such that said first and second sterilization cases form a stair-stepped stack of said plurality of sterilization cases so as to provide stability to said stair-stepped stack and to offset a center of gravity forward shift of said stair-stepped stack and thereby to prevent tipping of said stair-stepped stack when said drawer of said second sterilization case is slid to said open position, said second sterilization case being offset from said first sterilization case in said frontward to rearward direction such that said stair-stepped stack is self-supporting when any of said drawers of said plurality of sterilization cases is in said open position.

30. (Canceled)

31. (Previously Presented) The sterilization case assembly of claim 1, wherein each of said plurality of sterilization cases includes a front wall, a rear wall, and two opposing side walls, each said drawer including a side wall, each said front wall, rear wall, opposing side walls, and side wall of said drawer defines a plurality of holes configured for permitting sterilization of at least one surgical instrument contained in a respective said drawer.



32. (Previously Presented) The sterilization case assembly of claim 8, wherein each of said plurality of sterilization cases includes a front wall, a rear wall, and two opposing side walls, each said drawer including a side wall, each said front wall, rear wall, opposing side walls, and side wall of said drawer defines a plurality of holes configured for permitting sterilization of at least one surgical instrument contained in a respective said drawer.

33. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 18, wherein each of said plurality of sterilization cases includes a front wall, a rear wall, and two opposing side walls, each said drawer including a side wall, each said front wall, rear wall, opposing side walls, and side wall of said drawer defines a plurality of holes configured for permitting sterilization of at least one surgical instrument contained in a respective said drawer.

34. (New) The sterilization case assembly of claim 1, wherein said bottom wall of said second sterilization case is offset from said top wall of said first sterilization case in said frontward to rearward direction when said first and second sterilization cases are fully engaged relative to one another.

35. (New) The sterilization case assembly of claim 8, wherein said bottom wall of said second sterilization case is offset from said top wall of said first sterilization case in said frontward to rearward direction when said first and second sterilization cases are fully engaged relative to one another.

36. (New) The method of claim 18, wherein said bottom wall of said second sterilization case is offset from said top wall of said first sterilization case in said frontward to rearward direction when said first and second sterilization cases are fully engaged relative to one another.